

79 Deer Way
Horsham
RH12 1PX

16 December 2025

Dear Jason Hawkes

Response to planning application DC/25/1312 from Householder in Horsham

I believe that there are too many intractable constraints to the site, to make development on it possible without significant negative impacts. **I am, therefore, registering my objection to the application and requesting my local council to refuse it.**

The Site¹, West of Ifield (Wol), in application DC/25/1312, consists basically of Ifield Court Farm, Ifield Golf Course plus the nursery that was associated with Pound Cottage. Ifield Court Farm is still farmed, both arable and livestock; the Golf Course is popular, well used and the only 18-hole course for several miles; the plant nursery closed when it and Pound Cottage were bought by Homes England (HE). Rural land stretches west and north-west from the site to Rusper and Charlwood. Crawley is immediately to the east of the site. Gatwick Airport is 2 miles to the north. Horsham is the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for this parcel of land.

The **political and planning context** of this Site has changed significantly since it appeared as part of the 'green belt' on the original post-war plans for Crawley New Town in the early 1950s. In the intervening years, population pressures have seen Crawley grow from 55,000 residents to around 112,000. Other areas labelled as 'green belt' have been consumed for further housing, sometimes from surrounding Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) placing their development on the borders. Population increases have also affected Horsham. Recent large developments nearby such as North Horsham and Kilnwood Vale are slowly closing the gap between Crawley and Horsham. They already threaten the rural environment of Rusper and Charlwood Villages and the increased traffic is making the villages unsafe for residents.

The role of the relevant government agency responsible for the land has changed. The Commission for the New Towns became the Development Corporation (wound up in 1962), and through various iterations and amalgamations, became Homes England in 2018, with a clear mandate for development. The introduction of the Standard Method in 2018, with its revision in 2024, for determining housing numbers, is putting further pressure on LPAs.

Local residents have been aware of the growing pressure to develop the Wol site for over 40 years. Rumours 'they are thinking of moving the golf course further north' were circulating in the 1980s. An embryo master plan was presented in discussions in 2006 during the preparation of the Joint Area Action Plan between Crawley and Horsham². The Wol was offered to Horsham District Council (HDC) for development, but was not included in their 2015 Local Plan, it being deemed 'not deliverable'.

¹ Some of the background papers in the application use the phrase 'The Site' to refer to all the land that HE holds in this area, some of which is on the Crawley side of the boundary. There is no proposal in this application to build on the Crawley side, apart from the cycle path/footpath through Ifield Brook meadows.

² This resulted in the allocation of Kilnwood Vale for development

By the time of the 2024 Draft Local plan, HDC had included Wol as a strategic site for 3000 houses stating the potential for 10,000 as a plus point³. The HDC draft local plan (2024) was not approved at examination and is under revision at the present time⁴. The Wol is therefore not in the relevant Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF 2015). Nevertheless, HE has submitted this application and has removed the mention of 10,000 houses. Given the remit of HE, I find it hard to believe this application is not a first stage of a larger long-term plan to achieve the 10,000. The design as it stands with the market-place and high-rise buildings on its westerly edge, suggests it is poised ready to expand further west such that the market-place is at the centre of a much larger development.

My reason for highlighting this growing momentum for development on this site is that, like a snowball, it can gather pace and size to the point that no one feels they can stop it.

However, now that HE is drilling down into the detail for application DC/25/1312, the **intrinsic constraints of the site and the limitations of the mitigations are being brought into sharp focus**. Despite the many iterations HE has gone through in their plan revisions, those constraints are still there, and they limit the possibility of this development achieving its goals. The multitude of responses are exposing the difficulties.

Amongst the responses, there those who focus on the experience of the new residents inside the development and those who focus on the expected impact on existing residents, most of whom, but not all, are ‘outside’. Many responses focus on both.

The ‘inside’ comments relate to the need for compliance with policies within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the various regulations that must be followed. For example, the need for the correct proportion and relative location of open space⁵, the necessary height of the road to ensure escape routes in case of flood⁶, the alignment of junctions for safety of pedestrians and cyclists⁷. They often point to unrealistic assumptions used to develop strategy⁸.

There are requests for further information, with people reserving the right to respond again when it is available. National Highways, Environment Agency, HDC Landscape, Thames Water, as well as others, are in this category.

The voices of the ‘outside’/ existing residents are numerous and strong. They come from, for example, the adjoining LPA (Crawley), Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL), Rusper Parish Council, the people living close to the site⁹ or on the proposed access route to the south of the site, those concerned about damage to heritage, those defending both plant and animal species¹⁰ that

³ Since 2015, HE’s consultations have consistently referred to the potential for 10,000 houses. Only at the time of submitting this application has HE removed the mention of 10,000.

⁴ The site continues to be in the emerging local plan (eLP) – see response from HDC Strategic Planning

⁵ HDC Landscape Architect

⁶ See Environment Agency response

⁷ See Active Travel Response

⁸ The most commented on is the anticipated modal shift to sustainable transport. See responses from: Crawley Council; National Highways; WSCC Highways; WSCC Education; IVCAAC; Ash Cottage.

⁹ For example: The Tweed, Tweed Lane; Rectory Farmhouse, Ifield; many residents along the closed section of Rusper Road; people in Tangmere Road.


¹⁰ For example: Campaign for Protection of Rural England (Sussex); Natural England, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Save West of Ifield (SWOI), Woodland Trust

currently live on the site but cannot make their voice heard, those arguing for the rights of the rivers that flow through the site¹¹ and the displaced golfers from Ifield Golf Course.

Those who live nearby understand the local rural roads and know diversions drivers take to avoid the congestion in Crawley. They wonder why such a large development is proposed next to only category C roads. There is, for instance, a heartfelt cry from Charlwood Parish Council¹² that if the application does go ahead, “... *the exit by Bonnetts lane must be designed so that there is no access either in or out of the site to the north so that traffic does not route through Charlwood Village. To ignore this would cause the village of Charlwood to grind to a halt.*” Sadly, this will not mitigate the problem as drivers from the site can leave by the SW corner onto Rusper Road, turn right into Ifield Wood and then left into onto the Charlwood Road and still bring Charlwood to a standstill. Charlwood is just one of the forgotten voices in this application¹³.

As always, the ‘devil is in the detail’. The missing detail indicates that perhaps this application was submitted in haste, with the hope that in the prevailing climate of pressure to build, its shortcomings would be overlooked. More alarmingly HE might be hoping that the missing detail can be left to ‘reserved matters’ further down the road by which time it would be too late to realise impacts cannot be adequately addressed. And we need to bear in mind that this may be only the start of something much bigger.

In my mind, it is time to ‘pull the plug’ and refuse the application. I appreciate that the build-up of momentum, the money and time already invested, the political pressure to build under any circumstances, the expectations of future stakeholders, will make this a difficult decision. Nevertheless, I respectfully ask Horsham District Council, my local council, to refuse this application.


Resident,
79 Deer Way,
Horsham,
RH12 1PX

¹¹ Environment Agency, SWOI, Natural England, Thames Water re sewage management.

¹² See Charlwood Parish Council Response

¹³ See also responses from Rusper Parish Council, British Horse Society and Rusper House Lodge, Scout, Bat expert, residents on Tweed Lane and Rectory Lane, country walkers, people who live on Ifield Wood, people on the southern access route via Tangmere Road.